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[on the recommendation of Committee of Experts on Public Administration (E/2017/44)]

2017/23. Report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on its sixteenth session

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its resolutions 2015/28 of 22 July 2015, 2016/26 of 27 July 2016 and other related resolutions on public administration and development, in which it affirmed that service to citizens should be at the centre of transforming public administration and that the foundations of sustainable development at all levels include transparent, participatory and accountable governance and a professional, ethical, responsive and information and communications technology-enabled public administration,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",

Reaffirming also General Assembly resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,

Reaffirming further the outcome document, entitled "New Urban Agenda", adopted by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016,[1]

Recalling General Assembly resolution 69/327 of 14 September 2015, in which the Assembly reaffirmed the importance of freedom, human rights, national sovereignty, good governance, the rule of law, peace and security, combating corruption at all levels and in all its forms, and effective, accountable and inclusive democratic institutions at the subnational, national and international levels as central to enabling inclusive and accountable public services for sustainable development,

Noting the importance of integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning,

Referring to the United Nations Convention against Corruption,[2] which entered into force on 14 December 2005,

[1] General Assembly resolution 71/256, annex.

[2] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2349, No. 42146.

Please recycle

Recalling General Assembly resolution 71/212 of 21 December 2016, in which the Assembly recognized the need to harness the potential of information and communications technologies as critical enablers of sustainable development and to overcome the digital divides, and stressing that capacity-building for the productive use of such technologies should be given due consideration in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 69/228 of 19 December 2014 on promoting and fostering the efficiency, accountability, effectiveness and transparency of public administration by strengthening supreme audit institutions, in which the Assembly emphasized that efficient, accountable and transparent public administration has a key role to play in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals,

Recognizing the role of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration in providing policy advice and programmatic guidance to the Economic and Social Council on issues related to governance and public administration, and the relevance of the work of the Committee to the implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on its seventeenth session,[1] and expresses its appreciation for the work done by the Committee on ensuring effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through leadership, action and means, including on implications for public institutions of strategies for integrated action to achieve poverty eradication in accordance with the 2017 themes of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

2. *Invites* the Committee to continue to place the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[2] at the centre of its work and to continue to advise the Council on how public administrations can support the implementation and progress reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals;

3. *Welcomes* the contribution of the Committee to the high-level political forum, and reaffirms that the principle of leaving no one behind should be a core principle of public administration;

Transforming institutions for the Sustainable Development Goals

4. *Stresses* that Governments have the central role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and in eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world;

5. *Underscores* that realizing the Sustainable Development Goals requires addressing the deep inequalities that exist in many countries, which may require the State to play a greater role in effective redistribution and social protection programmes, including through more progressive and effective taxation systems and administration;

6. *Notes* that effective institutions are essential for the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

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[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2017, Supplement No. 24* (E/2017/44).

[2] General Assembly resolution 70/1.

7. *Welcomes* the fact that many countries are in the process of identifying and updating policies, strategies, institutions and arrangements for spearheading and coordinating the implementation and progress review of the Sustainable Development Goals, and also welcomes the ongoing exchange of lessons learned on this topic at the high-level political forum;

8. *Underscores* that there is no single blueprint for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and that identifying the most effective policies in a given context requires the participation and engagement of all stakeholders, inter alia, local authorities, civil society and the private sector, on various policy options;

9. *Invites* Member States, therefore, to ensure that policies to implement the Sustainable Development Goals are developed in a participatory, inclusive and collaborative fashion, noting that it is important to institutionalize participation and engagement to ensure that various parts of civil society have an opportunity to make their voices heard;

10. *Recognizes* that implementing the Sustainable Development Goals does not necessarily require the creation of new institutions and that existing institutions, such as planning ministries, have a critical role to play, working together towards the Goals;

11. *Reiterates* the importance of the sectoral ministries in developing and implementing policies in their respective areas, taking into account the interlinkages inherent in the Sustainable Development Goals, and underscores that it may be useful to invite such ministries to identify the Goals and targets they will address most specifically and adjust or develop related implementation plans or strategies in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders;

12. *Notes with appreciation* that some countries have informed and engaged their parliaments in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals and encourages all Governments to consider undertaking similar efforts, while noting that some parliaments have taken a proactive role in their implementation;

13. *Invites* Governments, international, regional and other organizations and the research community to develop practical tools to help policymakers in developing integrated plans and policies for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals based on interrelations among the targets;

14. *Notes* that realizing the Sustainable Development Goals is closely related to the delivery of public services and that there are important political and societal discussions on the scope, nature and financing of those services in many countries, and accordingly invites the President of the Council to convene a dedicated meeting on delivering public services for the Goals with a view to sharing ideas and discussing challenges, approaches, policies and lessons learned, inter alia, with regard to promoting effective redistribution and social protection programmes, including through more progressive and effective taxation systems and administration;

15. *Recognizes* that the policies for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals should be based on evidence and data and focused on achieving results;

16. *Also recognizes* the transformative power of information and communications technology, while noting that many forms of the digital divide remain;

17. *Welcomes* the fact that Governments are increasingly using information and communications technology to deliver public services and other functions and engage people in decision-making, as documented in the 2016 United Nations E-Government Survey, and encourages further efforts in this regard;

18. *Also welcomes* the symposium organized by the Government of the Bahamas and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat entitled "Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway in small island developing States: Equipping public institutions and mobilizing partnerships", held in Nassau from 21 to 23 February 2017, and invites the United Nations and other organizations to organize similar meetings for sharing experiences and building capacities within existing resources;

Promoting public sector leadership

19. *Stresses* that leadership at all levels of government and public administration is critical for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals;

20. *Welcomes* the fact that, in some countries, the highest level of government has engaged or remains engaged in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

21. *Underscores* that implementing the Sustainable Development Goals requires the actions of not only Governments but also multiple actors of civil society and the private sector and the launching of effective partnerships;

22. *Stresses* that awareness and ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals by institutions at all levels and by society at large are essential to promote their implementation, and invites Governments to undertake concerted efforts to raise awareness and increase ownership of the Goals within national, regional and local authorities, civil society, the private sector and society at large;

23. *Invites* Governments to launch initiatives to build the awareness and commitment of civil servants at all levels to the vision of the 2030 Agenda and encourages them to take leadership roles, innovate and break away from business as usual, inter alia, to address the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals; and also invites Governments to build the capacities and skills of civil servants in areas such as integrated and coherent policymaking, planning, implementation, foresight, consultation, evidence-based reviews of progress and the collection and use of statistics and data;

24. *Encourages* Governments to redouble efforts to ensure respect for the rule of law by institutions at all levels and ensure a merit-based civil service, which helps to promote public ethics and ensures effective and fair human resources management;

Implications of poverty eradication for public institutions

25. *Stresses* that eradicating poverty requires a whole-of-government approach whereby the highest level of government and every ministry and institution at the local or national level is committed to realizing that goal;

26. *Underscores* that the experience of some countries has shown that eradicating poverty requires multidimensional and targeted poverty eradication strategies entailing actions related to promoting inclusive economic growth; employment and decent work; social protection and equity; education and skills;

health; food and nutrition; housing; infrastructure; energy; water and sanitation; the environment and climate change; the building of effective, inclusive and accountable institutions; and other areas of the 2030 Agenda;

27. *Underlines* that the rule of law, peace and security, an independent judiciary and the proper administration of justice are critical conditions for improving the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable;

28. *Stresses* that poverty eradication strategies need to address rural and urban poverty and that a national plan for regional development may help to address the frequent disparities in the levels of poverty across territorial units within countries;

29. *Underscores* that continued weaknesses in governance, including corruption and the excessive influence of influential groups in society, hinder the effectiveness of poverty eradication strategies and the adequate allocation of resources, and invites countries to redouble efforts in addressing those issues;

30. *Reiterates* that, in designing poverty eradication strategies, Governments need to engage civil society and all segments of society, including the poorest and most vulnerable people, while building broad support and a solid consensus involving also the middle class and minorities;

31. *Notes* that, for reaching the poorest and most vulnerable, Governments often need to work with civil society and the private sector, and encourages Governments to continue to leverage such partnerships while safeguarding the quality and affordability of services for the poorest and most vulnerable;

Supporting and equipping local authorities

32. *Underscores* that subnational governments and, in particular, local governments have a critical role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and eradicating poverty, given their proximity to the population and, at the grass-roots level, their role in delivering basic public services and their ability to take integrated approaches, bearing in mind that Goal 11 is to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;

33. *Notes* that, to best respond to the situation, expectations and needs of people, it can be useful to transfer implementation roles and public functions related to specific Sustainable Development Goals from the central Government to local governments and other local agencies or institutions;

34. *Emphasizes* that, regardless of the model or the extent of decentralization in a country, both the central and local governments have a responsibility for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, and that it is critical that they work together in a spirit of collaboration and partnership;

35. *Affirms* that the resources and capacities of local governments should be commensurate with their responsibilities, and therefore notes that responsibility for the implementation of specific Sustainable Development Goals and targets should be transferred to the local level only if accompanied by an adequate level of financial resources and capacity development;

36. *Notes* that resources transferred from the central Government are thus often critical to support social and other programmes towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and invites countries, international organizations and other actors to support local governments and build their capacities to mobilize resources in a coordinated way;

37. *Stresses* the need to build the skills and capacities of elected officials and civil servants at the local level so that they are equipped to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

Reviewing progress

38. *Reaffirms* that Governments are accountable to their people for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

39. *Welcomes* the commitment of supreme audit institutions to contribute to reviewing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level, as expressed in the strategic plan of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions for the period from 2017 to 2022, and invites Governments to consider availing themselves of that support;

40. *Notes* that people need to have a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities, activities and results of the various public institutions, including those at local levels, and encourages the creation of platforms, forums or tools to make such information available;

41. *Emphasizes* the need to monitor the impact of public institutions and policies on poverty eradication and other Sustainable Development Goals through inclusive and evidence-based approaches engaging also the poorest and most vulnerable;

42. *Encourages* Governments to develop an open government system as a model of governance that focuses on citizens and establishes a new relationship between public administration and society;

43. *Reiterates* that disaggregated data are critical for policymaking and review, and calls for further efforts to build the capacities of national statistical offices as independent institutions;

Elaborating principles of effective governance

44. *Recognizes* the need for pragmatic ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to achieve the 2030 Agenda and other international agreements, and notes the work of the Committee on the elaboration of principles of responsible and effective governance which could serve as an important reference point in building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels and in support of the implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals;

Follow-up

45. *Requests* the Committee, at its seventeenth session, to be held from 23 to 27 April 2018, to examine and make recommendations on the theme of the 2018 session of the Council;

46. *Invites* the Committee to contribute to the thematic review of the high-level political forum and to work towards contributing to the overall review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to be conducted by the high-level political forum in 2019, giving particular attention to the cross-cutting nature of all the Goals;

47. *Also invites* the Committee to continue to advise on approaches and practices related to the institutions, policies and arrangements being established to promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, bearing in mind

that the specific contexts and situations of countries differ widely, as well as to advise on making institutions effective, inclusive and accountable;

48. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the present resolution fully into account in the work of the Organization, inter alia, in addressing gaps in research and analysis and in responding to the capacity development needs of Member States for building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels in pursuit of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

49. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to promote and support innovation and excellence in public services for sustainable development through the United Nations Public Service Awards;

50. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of and follow-up to the present resolution through the established working methods of the Committee.

42nd plenary meeting
7 July 2017